

Finding and Using Design Inspiration

Design Inspiration is a crucial part of improving your web design skills. It simply refers to any nice-looking design that you see online. And

I believe that in general, it is very important to collect and catalog good design inspiration always. It is important for two reasons:

One - That you can analyze it to get better.

Two - That you can refer to it whenever you have a specific design problem.

You can look through your saved inspiration and see if any of it solves the problem you are having.

This lesson is divided into two parts. First, I'm going to tell you where you can find great design inspiration and then, I'm going to tell you what you can do once you find it.

I'm just gonna give you my sort of simplest ways of cataloging it, and you are welcome to do whatever system works best for you. But the end goal is that you never just click by a good-looking site without cataloging it in some way or storing it so that your future self can refer to that when you're stuck on a design issue.

Where to find design inspiration?

Probably one of the most popular sites to collect design inspiration is Dribbble.com. It's a website where designers post finished work or sometimes works in progress. And you can follow different designers,

you can follow different design studios, and you just get this stream of incredible design inspiration. And once you follow a lot of people, you're just gonna get this constant stream of new ideas. The overall quality of the work shared here is very good. And from an inspiration perspective, the nice feature on 'Dribbble' is the fact that you can search by color and I mean literally any HEX code.

Next website - 'Awwwards' - you probably know, it is pretty much the gold standard when it comes to acknowledging the highest-quality web design produced today. 'Awwwards' has hand-picked a jury of web experts to weigh in on each submitted site. And they don't just evaluate a site based on how "pretty" it is: instead, they consider each site's design, usability, creativity, and content, give each dimension a score, then calculate a total score.

Next off - 'Land-book' - they market themselves as having "the finest hand-picked website inspirations," and it's with good reason. 'Land-book' offers a wide showcase of landing pages from various industries. On 'Land-book' you'll find a wide range of design inspiration, from SaaS landing pages, agency website, portfolios, and all the way to e-commerce stores. You can even make an account on their website and save a collection of the website designs you like to reference later. Whether you're looking for retro designs, inspiration for social media, looking to do a redesign, or working on user interfaces, 'Land-book' is a good place to get inspired.

A theme shop might not be the first place you think of when you're looking for creative inspiration. After all, the designs tend to the more generic side of the visual spectrum.

However, websites like 'Theme Forest' or 'Template Monster' can be

a really effective place to jump off from, since quality themes tend to have really good architecture and often pay close attention to best practices.

Last website I would like to mention, which I often check when searching for inspiration, is 'Pinterest'. Maybe you've heard of this little website – well.. 'Pinterest' has it all. If you search for “web design inspiration” on 'Pinterest', you'll see all the users who “pinned” their favorite web design content for others to see.

The final way I wanna talk about how to find good design inspiration is just your normal Web browsing. So anytime you see a nice-looking page take a moment to get inspired.

And the nice thing about looking at the live site, is that it's going to come with different animations, hover effects, which aren't easy to capture in the static screenshots that you usually see on 'Dribbble'.

Another thing that's good about collecting actual URLs of great websites is that you can go to where you know there's good design and you can analyze the responsive design patterns. You can see how the design behaves when you shrink your browser window.

Now, there are two useful Chrome extensions I'd like to mention here - one is called 'Awesome Screenshot & Screen Recorder' - I use it to easily download full page screenshots. It doesn't work perfectly every time, especially when there is a lot of animation going on, but it is useful. You don't need to take multiple screenshots and manually piece it together in Photoshop to get the full page layout as an image.

Next benefit to finding and collecting live sites as your design inspiration, and that is that it's easy to get the actual fonts. So if you

have an extension installed, and you should, you can just hover over any font on the site and see what font they're using.

Now, the big question that we have is, what do you do once you have found some design inspiration? Well, it kinda depends on where you found it. For websites like 'Dribbble' or 'Pinterest' - you can create an account and create collections (or boards) with your favorite designs. For other websites, it's great to keep screenshots in a folder, just simple as that. You can also simply bookmark nice websites and keep a folder of bookmarks with links to great websites.

What to do with design inspiration?

OK, so you have a bunch of designs saved - you might be wondering, how is that helpful?

The main thing you should do is take the time to analyze it - and I mean look at it in detail, notice what are the similarities between the sites you like. Take screenshots and actually write down what exactly you like about the website. Try to be as specific as you can. If you find yourself always saying "nice colors" "awesome fonts" - dig deeper. A good observation is something like "everything is aligned with something else", "the buttons look interesting because they use subtle gradients". Once you do that many times you'll start noticing the same things you like across different websites. Some of you might be worried that you don't have an eye for design. I hear the comments like "I know that my sites don't look good but I don't know why" - analyzing good designs will help you make the important connections, notice similar patterns and eventually improve your own work.

Another great exercise for beginners is trying to recreate the page or just a part of the page pixel by pixel, just for practice. I don't necessarily

mean the functionality (it is going to be difficult recreating any site in Divi if you are a beginner, but doing so in a graphic software if you are a designer is a one option) - I want you to try recreate the design itself, the alignment, font sizes, colors all that - so that it soaks in - you start noticing the tiny details - ohh... so this border radius is that many pixels, and the box shadow is that color and so on.. The fun part is that you shouldn't use the browser inspector - and simply try to recreate it by eye - just by looking at it - this way you'll force yourself to look into design in more detail.

And of course - this exercise is just for practice - you'd never want to copy someone else's design pixel by pixel!

And that sort of takes us to my next point. I just wanna take a second and sort of address the elephant in the room, which is plagiarism.

I talked a lot about finding others designers' work and how you should draw inspiration from others. But, obviously, you don't want to be plagiarizing other people's designs, you just wanna be inspired by the best of what's out there. So there's a couple ideas you should consider to avoid plagiarism.

First of all - the best idea is to draw inspiration from multiple sources - it is a bit less plagiarism and more just recombination. So if I go and get a font from a particular site that I like, I might use that font. I wouldn't use the same color palette of that same site. I might draw inspiration for a similar set of colors from a different site. And for the imagery, maybe

I have, my inspiration is yet a third site, that I end up using some sort of motif or do something similar to what they do. So that's one - do never focus on one site only.

But another fantastic way to avoid sort copying off of someone (because in some cases you might do that inadvertently) - so when you do any sort of inspiration-gathering, do it one day where you find your inspiration and you analyze it, but then stop for a moment and take the time, sleep on it. On the next day, do your design work without looking at the original. This way you'll remember what were your thoughts but you are trying to do things on your own from there. This will help to prevent your designs becoming too similar to the ones you were drawing the inspiration from.

So, to sum it up - the more sources that you can draw inspiration from, and the more time you can put in between, looking for inspiration and analysis, and then designing, the better.